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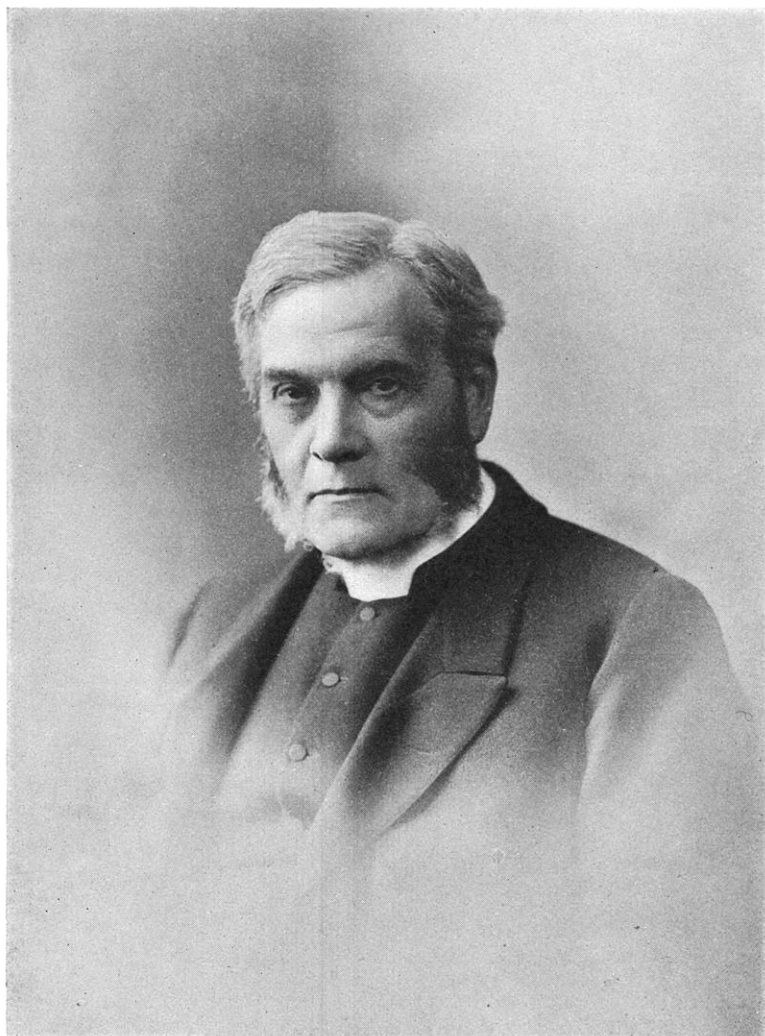
BARNABAS

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The name of Barnabas must always be regarded with affectionate reverence as that of the man who led the first mission to the gentiles. The name itself seems to have been conferred upon him, by the general consent of his friends, as a kind of degree or petname. Originally known by one of the commonest Hebrew names, Joseph or Joses, he was surnamed "Barnabas," which Luke (Acts 4:36) interprets as meaning "Son of exhortation" (or "of consolation") (*υἱὸς παρακλήσεως*).¹ He was a Levite and a Cypriot, and accordingly grew up as a Hellenist, speaking Greek, though of Hebrew blood and with strong ties to the Jewish religion.

Whether, as tradition reports, he was one of the Seventy sent out by our Lord, we do not know. He is first introduced as the finest example of the new enthusiasm aroused in the young Christian community. He was a landowner and promptly sold his property for behoof of those whose profession of the new faith had impoverished them (Acts 4:37). The same frank and prompt action of a generous nature appears in his quick apprehension of the change which had been wrought in Paul on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:27). He had kept himself more in touch with the world beyond than the apostles had done, and was aware of the events which proved the truth of Paul's conversion. While others looked askance at the new preacher of Christianity, fearing a snare, and scarcely conceiving it possible that so injurious a person should now be the friend of the church, Barnabas befriended the new convert and guaranteed him to the rest. This little incident throws a jet of light upon his character; for it was an act requiring no ordinary judgment, independence, and friendliness. It was, at any rate, the beginning of a remarkable and fruitful partnership of the two great Hellenists.

¹ For the difficulties found in this interpretation, see the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, art. "Barnabas." The name suggests that Barnabas had the *prophetic* gift of exhortation.



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Before Paul returned from Damascus to Jerusalem, a great scattering of Christian disciples had been occasioned by the martyrdom of Stephen and the accompanying persecution. Among those who were thus scattered beyond the confines of Palestine were men of Cyprus and Cyrene. Some of these, commissioned solely by their own compassion and humanity, broke through the barrier hitherto fencing out the gentiles and began to "preach the Lord Jesus even to the Greeks" (Acts 11:20). Their work was countenanced by the Lord, and a great multitude professed the new faith. This was in Antioch, and must have been at least four years after the death of Stephen. When news of this remarkable development reached Jerusalem, Barnabas was sent by the church to see that the work was being conducted on sound lines and to give the encouragement of his presence and voice. Accordingly, he went down to Antioch and "exhorted" all to abide in the Lord with purpose of heart; "for," as Luke discerningly adds, "he was a good man," a man open-hearted to believe and recognize good in others.

So abundant seemed the opportunity, as the whole gentile world was thus opening to the gospel, and so heavy the toil involved, that Barnabas, casting about in his mind for trustworthy assistance, bethought him of Paul, who had been engaged in similar work in his native province of Cilicia (Gal. 1:21). Going to Tarsus, Barnabas found it possible to persuade Paul to accompany him to Antioch. We know too little of the progress of the gospel in Cilicia to understand why Paul found it possible to leave it in other hands. Probably the account given him by Barnabas convinced him that Antioch was the more important center. In any case, he went there, and the two friends built up a great church.

One evidence of their success, and of the crisis it formed in the history of the church, is noted in Acts 11:26. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." That is to say, the number of gentiles who attached themselves to the church was so large that everyone at last perceived that this new community was not a mere Jewish sect, but a new religion, whose adherents must have a distinctive name. That these gentile Christians felt the same bond of brotherhood which the original disciples in Jerusalem had felt, was put beyond doubt by the willingness with which they contributed

to their Jewish brethren in Judea during the famine. No clearer or more convincing evidence could have been given that the world-old and impassable cleft between Jew and gentile had been bridged by Christianity; and it is, of course, for its significance in this respect that it is mentioned by Luke. The timely and suggestive aid was sent to headquarters by Barnabas and Paul, the former of whom had possibly been instrumental in inducing the Christians of Antioch to follow his own generous example. That men so prominent in Antioch should have been appointed to execute a financial mission which might to us seem more appropriate to less important persons, arose not only from the unifying purpose of the gift, but from the circumstance that in the Jewish church the apostles who had been from time to time sent out into the Diaspora to collect funds for the use of headquarters had always been "consecrated persons of a very high rank."²

On the return of Barnabas and Paul from this mission of love by which they intended to exemplify and seal the unity of the church, the "teachers and prophets" of Antioch were led to consider the propriety of sending the two apostles on a wider mission. The "teachers" and "prophets" were not, like presbyters and deacons, regularly elected and appointed officials of individual congregations, but, as possessing the *charismata*, or spiritual gifts, of instruction and exhortation, belonged to the whole church, and, as the Didache shows, passed from place to place. But, as men who were supposed to utter the mind of the Spirit, their voice was authoritative. Through them the Spirit said: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." From this it is legitimate to infer that Barnabas and Paul had themselves already opened the question whether they ought not to carry the gospel to a wider circle. Apparently they received no instructions regarding their route, but naturally betook themselves in the first place to the native country of Barnabas,

² "Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 412. "At the very moment when the primitive apostles recognized Paul as an apostle, they set him also a financial task (Gal. 2:10); he was to collect money throughout the Diaspora for the church at Jerusalem. . . . Taken by itself, it is not easy to understand exactly how the primitive apostles could impose this task on Paul, and how he could quietly accept it. But the thing becomes intelligible whenever we assume that the church at Jerusalem . . . considered themselves the central body of Christendom."—*Ibid.*

which also lay in their path to further lands. With what provision for their journey they were furnished, Luke does not tell us. They took with them the nephew of Barnabas, John Mark, who would be useful in finding lodgings, in writing letters, in preaching, and perhaps sometimes in interpreting. It would be interesting to know whether they took literally the Lord's command and carried no purse. They must, at any rate, have paid their fare, one would suppose, from Seleucia, the port of Antioch, to Salamis, and from Paphos to Perga. In passing rapidly from place to place Paul could scarcely have found work at his trade, although in somewhat similar circumstances in Macedonia he was able to maintain himself. They probably carried commendatory letters, which in some cases would mean hospitality. Sailing from Seleucia, about sixteen miles distant from Antioch, they landed, after a run of one hundred miles, at Salamis on the east coast of Cyprus, and there preached in the synagogues. There were more synagogues than one in Salamis because at that time the Jewish population was very large,³ possibly increased by the circumstance that Herod the Great had obtained a monopoly of the copper mines.⁴ Availing themselves, as was their custom, of the free worship of the synagogues, they preached "the word of God." This is the usual term by which Luke designates their gospel (Acts 13:5, 7, 44, 46, 48, 49); and by this apparently is meant the message which Jesus had brought to the world and which they, his apostles, now disseminate. The results of this preaching in Salamis are not mentioned, possibly because already the gospel had been proclaimed in these synagogues.

Leaving Salamis, they traversed the entire island, and at last reached Paphos in the extreme west. The name of Paphos was known all over the Roman world and frequently celebrated by the poets as the chief seat of the worship of Venus ("Kypris, the Cyprian"). Her annual festival was attended by vast multitudes that streamed in from all parts of the island. But what proved to be of greater moment for the work of the apostles was that the proconsul,⁵ Sergius Paulus,

³ Their numbers may be estimated from the fact that in 115 A. D. they massacred 240,000 Cypriots. In consequence they were banished from the island.

⁴ "Copper" is etymologically derived from *χάλκος κύπριος*, *aes cyprium*.

⁵ Cicero had been proconsul in 52 B. C.

had his court there.⁶ He was a man of intelligence, and, hearing of the impression produced by Barnabas and Paul, he summoned them to his presence. Already the proconsul had made the acquaintance of a Jew who belonged to that rather disreputable class of charlatans who, perhaps in some measure themselves deceived, roamed about telling fortunes, casting horoscopes, and trading in magic. Notwithstanding the resistance of this "devil's son and enemy of all righteousness," the words of Paul prevailed, and the proconsul passed from a laudable spirit of inquiry to a believing acceptance of the message. There is nothing incredible in this. It is merely an individual illustration of the preparedness for the Christian message which had been effected by the proved insufficiency of pagan religions and the ever-growing thirst for some true knowledge of the unseen and divine. The centurions of the gospels and Acts are the forerunners of this open-minded proconsul. His high rank is no difficulty, for no doubt he looked upon the Christian movement as an offshoot of Judaism, which was a *religio licita*.

At this point in the narrative Barnabas seems to fall back to the second place. Up to this scene in the proconsul's residence he has been regularly named before Paul; from this time onward he is almost always named after him. Thus the next move on the part of the missionary company is intimated in the words: "Paul and his company" (οἱ περὶ Παύλου) sailed from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. No reason is assigned for this important step. One might have expected that they would have remained in Paphos to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by the adhesion of the proconsul. Perhaps they did; but although Paul sometimes settled for a year, or even longer, in a particular town, his custom was rather to sow the seed and pass on. He had been impressed as others have been, with the parable of the seed "growing secretly" and while men sleep. Barnabas may have had many inducements to remain in Cyprus, but he yielded to the more eager spirit of his companion, and was persuaded to attempt the larger and more

⁶ Interesting confirmation of Luke's account is found in inscriptions and coins which speak of the governor of Cyprus at this period, not as a *proprætor*, as he had been under Augustus, the province being supposed to require military intervention, but as a proconsul appointed by the senate, or as Luke calls him, ἀνθύπατος. See the coins and inscriptions in General di Cesnola's *Cyprus*.

audacious enterprise. His nephew, Mark, who had hitherto accompanied and aided the two leaders, now withdrew and returned to Jerusalem—an action which may possibly reflect the reluctance of Barnabas himself to prolong the mission by passing into regions wholly unknown to him, and in which gentiles would predominate. For Paul it was not so novel an undertaking, as the circumstances in Cilicia would give him some indication of what he might look for in Galatia. It is true that many Jews did not hesitate year by year to penetrate far more remote parts of Asia Minor; and, as Harnack reminds us, a Phrygian merchant voyaged to Rome no fewer than seventy-two times in the course of his life, but inscriptions prove that the “perils from robbers” in the passes which led to the table-land of the interior were not merely imaginary. But we have no reason to suppose that it was any shrinking from danger or hardship which urged Mark homeward. In later times he showed no such shrinking, and it is quite as likely that he resented some personal slight, or that there existed in Jerusalem some attraction that determined his course. It is not quite clear whether he separated from the mission at Paphos or at Perga. If, as seems more probable, it was at Perga, then why did he sail from Cyprus at all? What had emerged on the voyage to induce him to change his mind? It speaks volumes for the loyalty of Barnabas that he did not so take Mark’s part as to secede with him.

Perga, about eight miles up the river Cestius, was a handsome walled city, but the apostles seem at once to have passed on to the Pisidian Antioch. The reason assigned by Ramsay for this procedure is that Paul was seized with malarial fever. Perhaps that is so, though the climate of Antioch is reported to be extremely trying. “Severe congestive fevers, *cold* fevers (or pernicious fevers, as they are called in Alexandria) are common and very fatal.” So that it has been held to be more likely that Paul, if attacked by fever at all, should have been so on the “swampy Galatian plain” rather than on the breezy seacoast. Probably in moving on to Antioch, the apostles were merely carrying out a carefully thought out plan of procedure. It is not to be supposed that any missionary pursues a merely haphazard course; and Paul and Barnabas apparently wished at once to reach the cities that lay on the great Roman route from East to

West. Their idea was to plant churches along the lines of traffic, and to trust to those posts for disseminating the gospel both in the neighboring districts, and among passing caravans. To this course they were almost compelled by their ignorance of the numerous vernaculars of Asia Minor—an ignorance which compelled them to devote themselves to centers where Greek was spoken.⁷ By preaching in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, they formed a chain of communication which required only one link more to unite these posts with Paul's native Cilicia.

For some considerable time, therefore, the activity of Barnabas was spent in the table-land some three to five thousand feet above the sea, which has been called "the bridge connecting Europe and Asia," across which "the religion, art, and civilization of the East found their way into Greece," and "the civilization of Greece, under the guidance of Alexander, the Macedonian, passed back again to conquer the East and revolutionize Asia as far as the heart of India."⁸ As elsewhere, so in these Asian provinces, the history of the native religions had been preparing the way for Christianity. It was the widely diffused and attractive worship of nature which prevailed also in these regions, but in forms which rendered it repulsive to the modesty of women and the growing intelligence of men. In thoughtful minds there was a longing for some truer fellowship with the divine, some clearer vision of the spiritual world than either their own religion or that of Greece or Rome had given them.

Antioch enjoyed the *jus italicum*; that is to say, it was exempt from public taxes and was governed by magistrates of its own. It was also a military center. Jews were sufficiently abundant to possess a synagogue. Thither the two apostles resorted on the sabbath and took seats among the people. The rulers of the synagogue, observing the strangers, invite them to speak, and Paul addresses the congregation—a congregation largely composed of proselytes, as the narrative again and again reminds us. According to Luke, the argument of Paul consisted of the presentation of

⁷ In Pisidia "the rustic population knew little or no Greek, . . . but there was a general belief that all persons of education ought to use Greek."—Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, p. 99.

⁸ Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, p. 23.

Jesus as the Savior divinely promised to Israel. The identification of Jesus as this promised Savior was accomplished by his resurrection. This address was followed by so pronounced a success among the gentile population ("almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God," Acts 13:44) that the Jews, moved by jealousy, succeeded in securing the banishment of the apostles from their city. It is to be remarked that Barnabas is mentioned as cordially uniting with Paul in recognizing that, if the Jews rejected the promised salvation, they were justified in carrying their gospel to the gentiles.

Shaking off the dust of Antioch, they made their way to Iconium, the chief city of the tetrarchy of Lycaonia. Here, however, their experience in Antioch was repeated. Many Jews and Greeks believed, but so hostile did the unbelieving section of the community become that the apostles were compelled to seek safety by flight. One result of their preaching in Iconium has been discovered in the romantic story of Thecla, a girl so possessed by the glad tidings that she disguised herself as a boy and followed Paul and Barnabas.⁹

Fleeing to Lystra, they seem to have spent some time evangelizing the surrounding country. For a time they were unmolested. Indeed, their healing of a lame man produced so great an impression that they were hailed as gods who had come down in the likeness of men, Barnabas being identified with Jupiter, Paul with Mercury, because he took the lead in speaking. This belief came more readily to the mind of the inhabitants of Lystra, owing to the tradition that Jupiter had once before visited their city in human form. That Barnabas could possibly be identified with Jupiter, with whose statue they were familiar, is a tribute to his appearance. This outburst of popularity was, however, short-lived. Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, with that pertinacity of hatred which Paul seems invariably to have aroused. Persuaded by these Jews, the Lycaonians, true to their character for fickleness,¹⁰ passed from adoration to detestation, and so seriously assaulted Paul by stoning that he was left for dead. He proved, however, to be merely stunned,

⁹ See Ramsay's careful examination of the story and his judgment regarding the residue of fact.—*The Church in the Roman Empire*, Chap. XVI.

¹⁰ ἄπιστοι γὰρ Λυκάονες; cf. Lewin, *Paul*, p. 151.

and with the help of Barnabas, was able next day to reach Derbe, twenty miles to the west.

Why the evangelists did not proceed to Tyana, and so to Cilicia through the Cilician Gates, we do not know. Perhaps, as Ramsay, suggests, they did not wish to go beyond the limits of Roman government.¹¹ "He did not go on to Laranda, which was probably a greater city than Derbe, at the time, owing to its situation and the policy followed by King Antiochus. Nor did he go to the uncivilized, uneducated native villages or towns of Roman Galatia, such as Barata." Barnabas and Paul seem to have remained some time in Derbe. At least they do not seem to have been molested while retracing their steps, although the counsel they gave to the churches in Lycaonia and Pisidia indicates that persecution of one kind or other had already begun (Acts 14:22). The reason of the return of Paul and Barnabas is probably given in the statement that they appointed by vote presbyters in each church. They had on their first visit been driven away hurriedly before any solidity by organization could have been given to the new companies of believers. They felt that they could not leave them in this precarious condition, and probably the believers themselves sent messengers after them to inquire how they could best combine. The return journey therefore might seem quite necessary. Having accomplished their purpose, they go down to Perga, where they proclaim their gospel, with what results we are not told. Finding no ship there sailing to Seleucia, they proceed to Attalia, and thence to their starting-point.

Arriving in Antioch, they report to the church which had sent them on their mission, that God had "opened the door of faith to the gentiles," an announcement which in a church so composed must have produced great delight. For some considerable time (Acts 14:28) the two friends remained in Antioch, until an inevitable difficulty arose. The tidings of their successful mission had reached Jerusalem and roused among the stricter party feelings of indignation. It was not denied that the gentiles might share in the blessings of salvation, but, in order to do so, they must first become Jews. Salvation belonged to the Jews. It was theirs by the promise of God.

¹¹ *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 112.

The Christ was theirs. Those who in pre-Christian days had coveted the blessings of the Jews had become proselytes and submitted to circumcision. Those who now sought to share in the full blessings of the messianic reign must follow the same course. Barnabas and Paul, who knew the gentile mind and who also understood the sufficiency of Christ alone for salvation, refused to listen to this demand. They saw that the gentile world would never submit to circumcision, and that to represent anything but Christ as essential for salvation was to misrepresent the gospel.

The conflict of opinion between the rigid Jewish Christian and the gentile Christian sections of the church became so evident as to threaten the formation of two churches, and the committal of the community in Antioch and elsewhere to fatal internecine strife. To avoid this calamity, Paul and Barnabas, with certain others, among whom was the uncircumcised Titus, proceeded to Jerusalem to consult the apostles and presbyters there. In writing to the Galatians, Paul tells them that he went up "by revelation;" that is to say, it was borne in upon his own mind, and upon the mind of others concerned, that a decision of the mother-church was probably the only way to end the conflict and extinguish the ill-feeling. He then also gives valuable information regarding his own reception by the leading men. The public aspect of the embassy is recorded in Acts. In Jerusalem they of course met the same class of people and the same objections to free and universal salvation as in Antioch. Peter's influence prevailed to win for Barnabas and Paul a fair hearing, and the former, as well known in Jerusalem, seems to have been first asked to relate what he had seen of the grace of God among the gentiles (Acts 15:12). James followed with a few wise words, the result of which was that Jude and Silas were sent down with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, bearing a letter or decree which gave the utmost satisfaction to the gentile Christians (15:31), freeing them, as it did, from the necessity of circumcision and from other ceremonial requirements.

Jude and Silas remained in Antioch long enough to see that their mission was successful, and they returned to Jerusalem under the impression that all would now be harmonious. Such, however, was not the case. After a time other emissaries from Jerusalem

appeared in Antioch with a new plea. Recognizing that it was now useless to deny salvation to the uncircumcised, they executed a change of front and now claimed that the uncircumcised were a lower grade, a kind of second-class Christians, with whom a pure Jew could not hold intercourse. This was a bold step on the part of the rigorists of the mother-church, the rather because Peter himself happened to be at Antioch at the time of their visit and had been unscrupulously eating with gentiles. But such was the influence of these skilfully selected emissaries, and so inveterate the Jewish prejudice against ceremonial defilement, that not only Peter, but Barnabas himself, was carried away by them and separated himself from gentile intercourse. This conduct Paul brands as hypocrisy. They pretended to have scruples which they really did not feel. While the strict Jewish Christians from Jerusalem were present, they posed as scrupulous Jews, although, in point of fact, before these persons appeared they had freely eaten with gentile Christians. The rebuke which Paul administered to Peter (Gal. 2:11-21) was probably sufficient to terminate the conflict at least for a time.

How long after this unhappy incident Barnabas remained in Antioch we have no means of knowing with precision. "After some time," Paul proposed to him that they should revisit the churches they had founded in Cyprus and Asia Minor. Barnabas agreed and expressed a desire to take his nephew Mark along with them, for, as Paul himself afterward acknowledged, he was a most useful assistant. But on this occasion Paul refused to select from a number of possible helpers the very man who had formerly declined to make the same journey. In this difference of opinion Barnabas displayed an obstinacy which would have served him well on some other occasions. He had probably committed himself to Mark before consulting Paul, and possibly he might be beginning to find it irksome to be under the shadow of so dominating a personality as Paul's. At any rate, the result was that they divided the mission between them, Paul taking Silas and proceeding direct to Asia Minor, Barnabas taking Mark and revisiting Cyprus.

From this point Barnabas disappears from sacred story, and the traditions regarding him are untrustworthy. The "Acts and Passion of Barnabas," an apocryphal work of the fifth century, tells us that

in the neighborhood of Cape Krommyon he converted two temple slaves, whose names are given; that after traversing the island he returned to Salamis, where he fell a victim to the fanaticism of the Jews in 56 or 57. Tertullian credits him with the Epistle to the Hebrews, and many critics have adopted this opinion. It has much to recommend it; but if, as is now usually believed, that epistle was addressed to a house-church in Rome, it seems unlikely that it should have been written by one who, so far as is known, had no connection with that city. The epistle which is named "the Epistle of Barnabas" is not authentic.

The record we have of the life of Barnabas is sufficient to convince us that he was a man of kindly, generous nature, an affectionate relative and steadfast friend, and so convinced a believer in Christ that he eagerly devoted his possessions and himself to his service. Whether it is quite fair to take him, as Newman does, as the type of those who are tolerant of religious error, may be doubted. He was more a man of feeling than of thought, and at Antioch failed to perceive the issues involved in his conduct. The sound character of the man who, after experiencing the privations and dangers of a first missionary tour with Paul, was prepared to accompany him on a second journey is above suspicion; and although in their various combined activities Paul takes the first place, to be second to Paul is no mean achievement, and probably the great missionary himself would be the first to acknowledge the encouragement and strength he found in having such a friend as Barnabas with him.

An interesting legend tells how in the fifth century St. Barnabas interposed to protect the liberties of the island church against the usurpations of Peter the Fuller, by appearing in a vision to the archbishop Anthemios, and pointing out the spot where he lay buried. On opening the tomb they found a chest containing the remains of the saint, with a copy of Matthew's gospel, in Barnabas' own handwriting, upon the breast. It could no longer be doubtful that the church of Cyprus had no less a claim to be apostolic than that of Antioch. Even in comparatively recent times the Cypriot historian, Kyprianos, celebrates the merits of Barnabas in the following language:

I doubt whether any other apostle so defended his native land and proved himself such a patriot as our Barnabas, who during his life freed his fellow countrymen from the abominable worship of idols by teaching them the true faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and after his death delivered the holy church of his native land from the oppression of the ambitious and grasping clergy of Antioch, and raised it to such an eminence that it was the envy even of those of the highest rank in the hierarchy. Truly and without doubt the veritable Son of Consolation, he, I mean Barnabas, fulfilled in all respects the injunction, "Fight for faith and fatherland." Under what an obligation, then, are we Cypriots to the deliverer of our souls, to the benefactor and originator of our church's renown, let each decide for himself; and let us celebrate the patron and protector of his native land both in the present life and in the one to come.¹²

¹² Hackett, *History of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus*, p. 25. An excellent bibliography of Cyprus will be found in Mr. Hackett's volume.